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**TO: Economic Support Supervisors
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**FROM: Amy Mendel-Clemens
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**SUBJECT: Transportation Assistance For W-2
and Low Income Recipients**

BWP/BIMA OPERATIONS MEMO

No.: 02-57

**File: 2411 2440
2441 2445
6200**

Date: 9/27/2002

Non W-2 ☐ W-2 ☒ CC ☐

PRIORITY: Medium

CROSS REFERENCE: W-2 Manual Chapters 1.6.3.3, 11.3.0 13; and 18.6
WAA Program Guide
FSET Manual 2.4.2

EFFECTIVE DATE: October 1, 2002

PURPOSE

This memo announces the FSET transportation support services policy change, encourages transportation coordination at the local level and clarifies existing policy regarding:

- Allowable transportation assistance for people applying for W-2
- Available transportation assistance for W-2 participants
- Adapting transportation to W-2 participants' family activities and work program goals
- Allowable transportation and restrictions for individuals placed in Unsubsidized Employment, which includes:
 - CMS** – (unemployed individuals capable of obtaining employment);
 - CMU** – (individuals working in unsubsidized Employment), and
 - CMF** – (employed individuals previously assigned to a subsidized employment position)
- Allowable transportation for people not enrolled in W-2
- Use of Job Access Loans for auto purchases, and
- When transportation assistance ticks the TANF clock

BACKGROUND

Transportation is a crucial supportive service for W-2 participants and low-income individuals to succeed in the work world. Transportation services vary by community. W-2 agencies have developed extensive networks and partnerships so W-2 applicants and participants, work site supervisors and employers can access transportation options that best meet the needs of their geographic location.

The discussion regarding transportation needs and resources begins with the Resource Specialist (RS) and the initial Financial Employment Planner (FEP) interview and continues throughout the relationship and as situations change and advance. This partnership approach includes the participant, RS, FEP, work site supervisors, local service providers and transportation resources. W-2 agency personnel must share information on all available transportation services with the applicants and participants and allow them to make an informed choice based on personal circumstances and available resources.

NEW POLICY

As a result of the recently enacted Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (Farm Bill) P.L. 107-71, the \$25 dollar transportation/work-related expense limit is lifted and agencies can now use actual costs to reimburse participants beyond \$25. The removal of the \$25 limit applies to all FSET participants (ABAWDs and non-ABAWDs). An FSET participant with children can continue to use TANF funds to pay for transportation costs. FSET participants with children do not need to be placed in W-2 to receive TANF funding for transportation.

Reminder: The 60-Month clock begins ticking the fifth consecutive month of receipt of TANF funding for transportation if the FSET participant is not employed at least one hour per week. See below for further details.

POLICY (CLARIFICATIONS)TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE DURING APPLICATION

Individuals who apply for W-2 are eligible for transportation assistance for up-front activities. This includes activities assigned by the Resource Specialist such as job search. This is not ongoing assistance but fills the gap between the time the applicant sees the Resource Specialist and a placement decision is made.

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE FOR W-2 PARTICIPANTS IN TRIAL JOBS, CSJ, CMC OR W-2T

W-2 participants are eligible for transportation assistance to meet their individual needs. Transportation assistance will vary from participant to participant depending on the assigned activities, child care needs, the distance s/he travels and the resources available in the area. In most cases this includes, but is not limited to, bus passes or tickets, mileage reimbursement, and gas vouchers and may include creative individual and group solutions. When a participant and FEP are creating an Employability Plan (EP), transportation concerns must be discussed and resolved before a participant signs the EP. The FEP must take into consideration the entire family when looking at transportation assistance, including providing funding or resources

so the parent can successfully attend assigned activities. If a participant realizes he or she cannot complete required activities on a regular basis because of a transportation issue or the transportation option does not accommodate his or her needs, the FEP and the participant must look at alternative solutions. A FEP must discuss, with the participant, the importance of notifying the FEP as soon as a situation arises that hinders his or her participation including transportation.

Good cause may be granted for situations where transportation hinders a person's ability to complete assigned hours. The FEP determines whether circumstances were beyond the control of the participant and merits a good cause exemption.

Example 1: Arrietta lives in an urban area and she just started her work site at the local elder care program. Arrietta informs her FEP that one of her children has a disability and attends a special program on the other side of town that starts at nine in the morning. It is about a 40-minute bus ride from home. Her other children go to their auntie's in-home daycare close to the work site. If there are no delays, she can arrive at the work site by 10 a.m. Work site activities usually start at 9 a.m. Arietta discusses her schedule with the FEP. The FEP contacts the work site placement specialist who confirms that a late start time is acceptable with the site. Arietta and the FEP plan to look for alternative transportation options to the specialty school so Arietta will spend less time on the bus and more time at the work site.

Example 2: JoJo lives in a small rural community and has an older car that guzzles gas and breaks down frequently. JoJo attends a full time drug treatment program in a near by town. JoJo missed two days last week because her car broke down on the way to her treatment program. She hopes to save for a new car so it is easier and more economical for her to get around. Her dad is retired and willing to drive JoJo everyday as long as he is reimbursed for gas money. The FEP discusses the two options with JoJo and although JoJo prefers the independence of driving herself, she does not wish to use a Job Access Loan (JAL) to fix her older vehicle and decides her dad's auto is more reliable. The FEP instructs JoJo to keep a mileage log and turn it in at the end of the month for reimbursement. The FEP also issues two gas vouchers to the local convenience store to cover the cost of the first month's gas. The FEP applies good cause to the hours she missed because her car broke down.

The FEP may need to address outside concerns that may affect the participant's ability to use a viable transportation option.

Example 3: Flora is new to the city and the bus line. She transports her children to school and day care and is consistently 45 minutes late for her work activity. Flora's FEP notices on her time sheet the consistent late arrival time. At their weekly meeting, the FEP addresses the late arrivals and learns that Flora is not used to getting up early or relying on a bus and her children are also having trouble with this adjustment. The FEP informs Flora that arriving on time is a crucial aspect of maintaining employment. Flora and her FEP make a morning calendar that includes a list of tasks to complete the night before and in the morning. Flora tells the FEP she does not own an alarm clock. The FEP provides a voucher to a hardware store to purchase an alarm clock. The FEP does not adjust the EP, but decides to good cause the hours for the week she was late and informs Flora that next week good cause will not be granted for running late.

TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE FOR INDIVIDUALS IN AN UNSUBSIDIZED PLACEMENT

Participants placed in an unpaid W-2 placement (CMS, CMF, CMU) may be eligible for transportation assistance. The participant must have a current Employability Plan (EP) and regular contact with the FEP. If an individual is coded CMS, the FEP must consider placing the individual in a W-2 paid placement. If an individual does not find unsubsidized employment within 30 days, while re-evaluating the placement and possibly altering the EP, the FEP must consider the changing transportation needs of the participant.

Reminder: The 60-Month clock begins ticking the fifth consecutive month of receipt of TANF funding for transportation if the participant is not employed at least one hour per week. See below for further details.

USE OF TANF FUNDS TO PAY FOR TRANSPORTATION OF SOMEONE NOT CURRENTLY ENROLLED IN W-2 OR THE FOOD STAMP EMPLOYMENT AND TRAINING (FSET) PROGRAM

If a W-2 agency wishes to pay for transportation costs using TANF funds for a person who is not in a W-2 component or not in FSET, the FEP must place the person in a case management position to authorize transportation assistance.

The Workforce Attachment and Advancement (WAA) program also pays for supportive services such as transportation on a short-term basis as part of the job retention, skills training and job placement, or basic skills development components. Supportive services are not a primary emphasis of the WAA program and other resources should be used to address a participant's long term needs. Any transportation assistance should be coordinated with existing providers or services already offered.

USE OF JOB ACCESS LOANS FOR CAR PURCHASE OR REPAIR

The availability of car ownership programs vary throughout the state. Reliable personal transportation allows individuals more employment options. The Department encourages agencies to build relationships with car ownership programs for low-income families in their areas.

Job Access Loans (JAL) are short term no interest loans to meet expenses related to obtaining and maintaining employment. A car loan, including down payment and repairs to provide transportation to work or to look for work, is an appropriate use of JAL funding. JAL funding can also be coupled with other automobile purchase programs such as those funded by the Wisconsin Employment Transportation Assistance Program (WETAP). Refer to Chapter 13 in the W-2 manual for more details on the JAL program.

WHEN TRANSPORTATION ASSISTANCE TICKS THE TANF CLOCK

A participant is eligible to receive transportation assistance if they are unemployed and in FSET or an unsubsidized W-2 placement. However, if they receive transportation assistance for four consecutive months without working more than one hour per week, transportation assistance counts as assistance under Federal TANF Regulations. This means the TANF 60-month clock will tick in the fifth consecutive month. The FEP must manually tick the clock and document it in case comments.

Needing to tick the clock in the fifth month, under these circumstances, should be a rare occurrence. However, if it appears a participant might fall into this category, discuss the benefits of the transportation assistance and the effects a tick of the clock might have on the participant. Allow the participant to determine what is best for his or her situation. Refer the participant to local resources that might be available to fund transportation for the fifth month. Once the assistance is not used during a month, the four month restriction starts over. For example, if a person gets four consecutive months of transportation assistance and does not use it the fifth month and then requests it the following month, the four month restriction starts again.

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